Intriguing People of the Lowcountry

"The more I learn about the Lowcountry, the more I want to know."

Annelore Harrell

Bluffton's Woman of Many Hats

PHOTO BY GERALD WEAVER

"I think Annelore Harrell is truly a Renaissance woman. She is filled with life – multi-talented, astute and bright, a real optimist in the real sense of the word. She has a great deal of faith. She has faced a lot in this world and she always exits with a smile," described Harrell's good friend and neighbor, Carolyn Bremer. Known for sporting a fashionable hat most of the time, Annelore could best be described as a "woman of many hats." Wife, mother, newspaper columnist, real estate agent, actress, former local television anchor, political activist, and self-described Krispy Kreme afficionado – these are but a few of the endearing qualities of Annelore Harrell. Just awarded the first-time-ever person who most exemplifies the "Bluffton State of Mind," she is bumfoozled, flabbergasted, humbled and deeply honored to receive this recognition.

With a magnificent view of the May River from her living room, Annelore explained the pronunciation of her name. "Oh, I've been called Annie Lori, Anna Laura, Anna Lou, Eleanor, Laura May, and simply 'La La' or 'Lolly' by my grandchildren; it really doesn't matter," she explained in her lovely southern Georgia accent. Born and raised in Savannah, Annelore grew up as a "latchkey child." "My parents ran a jewelry store and children just simply followed the rules. We respected our parents and you just did what was expected after school. There was not a realization or any deprivation of any sort," she related. Perhaps it was the start of her independent and free spirit.

She married George William Harrell 51 years ago, becoming an army officer's wife. Living abroad in Germany for three tours and a magnificent one-year stay in Hawaii were the highlights of her early years as wife and mother of five. All along the way, Annelore met interesting people and jumped into various leadership roles when asked.

Eventually they returned to settle on Myrtle Island in Bluffton where parenting remained her primary focus. She became involved more and more in her community through the school as well as her church.

"Church has been part of my life always. Perhaps it was just how I was raised. We just went to church every Sunday and so I do. I just know that God watches over me and always has. It is my faith that has taken me through not only the bad times in my life, but also the wonderful times,"she said. Those who know her admire her resilience. She always seems able to readily bounce back from whatever is thrown her way, be it a new career or a family tragedy.

"For example, my entrée into real estate was serendipity. George William said we needed to learn more about property and investment. So, without further ado, I did. I became a real estate broker. I find the day-to-day challenges and the diverse nature of real estate to be fascinating to this day. The more I learn about the Lowcountry, the more I want to know." explained Harrell.

"I've actually had the privilege of participating in Leadership Hilton Head, Leadership Bluffton and Leadership South Carolina. These three similar yet geographically specific classes have really broadened my base of knowledge about the Lowcountry. I ask myself often if people who relocate are seeking out the old or moving to create change. Neither is right or wrong, it's just an interesting question. Beauty is often in the eye of the beholder when it comes to homes and land in the Lowcountry. I find that homes that were once beautiful, subtly immersed in their natural surroundings, are now called "tear-downs." Some might call my home a tear-down. In my mind, I question this. Isn't part of the beauty of the Lowcountry these understated abodes?" She challenges anyone moving here to ask why they want to be here. Is it because you want to be part of this rich heritage or does it just seem to part of the new trend?

An actress at heart, one of her favorite roles was as co-anchor to a community television program on Laverne Ward's Channel 15 in Bluffton (a local-access television station that thrived in Bluffton for many years). "We called Laverne's operation the BBC, the Bluffton Broadcasting Channel. It's really where I started writing. I would dash to the station before our live broadcast with a script of 'worldly events happening in Bluffton' and we would go on the air," Annelore fondly reminisced.

Her television writing eventually led to her present newspaper column called Some Times in The Carolina Morning News. "I think it originally was supposed to be about nostalgia bits about Bluffton. What it has become is more. I think it quite often portrays the people in our community, past and present, with an important theme that Bluffton itself is always beyond even Bluffton."

One of Annelore's trademarks has to be her fashion statement with hats. Whether leading the way with a local women's investment group or the Bluffton League of Women Voters or whipping up a fun, tasty family dinner for 20 at the last minute, she continues to "wear many hats with flair."
– Lisa Carroll